



Metropolitan Varsonofiy of St Petersburg and Ladoga Meets with His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem



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On September 15, His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III of the Holy City of Jerusalem and All Palestine received Metropolitan Varsonofiy of St Petersburg and Ladoga and the group of pilgrims accompanying him in the Small Throne Room of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

The meeting was attended by Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, General Secretary of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem; Bishop Lazarus of Narva and Pechory; Archimandrite Vassian (Zmeyev), Head of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem; clergy of the St Petersburg Diocese; students of St Petersburg Theological Academy; and pilgrims from Russia and Estonia, the **Mission's website**

reports.

Addressing the pilgrims, His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos noted that in today's world, when people are surrounded by numerous temptations, the role of the Church of Jerusalem is unique. This place was sanctified and blessed by the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus Christ; this land received His Body. The Most Holy Theotokos was also buried here. Therefore, the Holy Land is a place of unity for Christians, and especially for Orthodox Christians. It is here that one can fully comprehend the words of the Apostle Paul that in Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew, but all are one (Col. 3:11). In Jerusalem, pilgrims from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds are received. The clergy of the Church of Jerusalem give thanks to the Lord and pray for peace to be established and wars to cease. The Lord allows wars because of our sins, while sin is a bodily and spiritual illness. Therefore, the Church is essentially a hospital, a place of healing; it is no coincidence that evil forces attack it. People in Russia know this well, for they have direct experience of how an atheistic government attempted to destroy the Church, believing that by destroying monasteries and churches it would also destroy people's souls, but this did not happen.

In his words of greeting, Metropolitan Varsonofiy noted that the pilgrimage was being undertaken with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' and conveyed to His Beatitude the greetings of the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church, thanking Patriarch Theophilos for his hospitality.

The Head of the St Petersburg Metropolia noted that, unfortunately, there are currently both ecclesiastical disturbances and military conflicts in many places, particularly in the Holy Land, the Middle East and Ukraine.

“We know you as an unceasing intercessor for peace and a zealous advocate of the unity of the Orthodox Churches, fidelity to the holy canons and the tradition preserved and handed down to us by our pious predecessors,” Metropolitan Varsonofiy said. “You set an example to the whole world of firmness and steadfastness in defending Orthodoxy and carry out a great mission: you heal divisions within the family of the Local Churches through prayer, words of support and exhortation, patience and wisdom. We too continually pray that the Lord may open the spiritual eyes of those afflicted by sinful blindness and help them find the path to truth and unity of mind. In our difficult times, every believer seeks spiritual consolation. Where, if not here, in the Holy Land, can one draw upon grace and strengthen one's spiritual strength?”

Metropolitan Varsonofiy presented Patriarch Theophilos with a set consisting of a pectoral cross and two panagias (encolpions), as well as a box of sweets produced in St Petersburg. He also presented a gift from St Petersburg Theological Academy - a copy of an icon of the Holy Apostle John the

Theologian.

Patriarch Theophilos presented Metropolitan Varsonofiy and Bishop Lazarus with altar crosses decorated with mother-of-pearl, and gave the pilgrims small icons of the Jerusalem Mother of God.

Source: <https://mospat.ru/en/news/94549/>